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New York

President: Mr. Udovenko . . . . . (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 48

Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)

The President: I should like to inform representatives that, following consultations regarding agenda item 48, "Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)", and taking into account General Assembly decision 51/407 of 25 October 1996, it is proposed that the General Assembly decide to postpone consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of its fifty-third session.

May I take it, therefore, that the Assembly, taking into account decision 51/407, wishes to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-third session?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 48.

Agenda item 10 (*continued*)

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/52/1)

Mr. Al-Hitti (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation wishes to begin by welcoming the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization that we are considering today. We commend the highly praiseworthy efforts that went into preparing the report. But we believe that it might have been more useful had it avoided certain generalizations and imprecise conclusions as well as certain contradictions with regard to certain concepts and their applications.

We believe that the report in its analyses focuses on symptoms and end results of international problems rather than their root causes and on ways to deal with them. It also provides generally an exposé in summary form of international problems and variables and of the efforts the United Nations has made to come to grips with them without giving adequate attention to exploring future horizons. This is especially so as regards proposing concrete solutions to problems which are battering our planet at present, such as poverty, famine, the deterioration of the environment and sustainable development, the widening gap between North and South and the absence of the principles of justice and equity in international relations, as well as the use of selectivity and double standards when it comes to the consideration by United Nations bodies of issues of grave international importance such as peace, security, disarmament, development and other important international questions.

To save time, I shall be brief. I intend to focus on two paragraphs of the Secretary-General's report, paragraphs 89 and 125 although there are comments regarding a number of other paragraphs.

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With regard to paragraph 89, the report refers to the use of mandatory sanctions as a valuable tool available to the Security Council, permitting the United Nations to bring pressure to bear without recourse to force. We believe that that may be true only from an abstract and theoretical perspective. But it ignores the framework in which this instrument is included in the Charter, namely, that sanctions are to be imposed only after exhausting all peaceful and preventive means to seek a pacific settlement, as set forth in Chapter VI of the Charter. This was not the case with Iraq.

Furthermore, the Charter does not call for the imposition of sanctions as a blank cheque or as a means for revenge and punishment. We wonder how economic sanctions can figure under the label of "preventive diplomacy" and the pacific settlement of disputes when they lead to the death of more than a million and a quarter innocent Iraqi citizens, most of whom are children, women and old people. In addition, 4 million Iraqi citizens have been subjected to famine and malnutrition, as has been recognized in the latest joint report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme issued on 5 October 1997.

If the economic sanctions were really pacific and preventive measures, the United Nations would not have to review them through a sub-working group on sanctions that reached important conclusions and recommendations that are totally disregarded in the Secretary-General's report. Otherwise, the Secretary-General's representative, Ms. Graça Machel, would not have included in her report last year, on military confrontations and their implications for children, the remark that caution should be exercised and precautions taken before sanctions are imposed against States. What is important here is that economic sanctions, in view of their destructive consequences for populations and development and their sowing the seeds of future conflicts, can be anything but a preventive or peaceful tool.

In his report, the Secretary-General dealt with the economic sanctions against Iraq as if they were to be imposed permanently and as if during the last seven years Iraq had not implemented the resolutions of the Security Council in such a manner as to justify the lifting or reduction of such sanctions by the United Nations. If this is the case, then the United Nations, which is now trying to rationalize its expenses and reform its Headquarters and field procedures, should review its work in Iraq, and should enquire of its teams and of the thousands of employees which it has been dispatching for the past seven years regarding Iraq's compliance and the scope of their accomplishments at all levels.

As regards the oil-for-food formula referred to in paragraph 89, we wish to say that this formula has been emptied of its contents and of any implications of human significance because of the acts of incessant piracy on the part of the representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom within the boycott Commission to obstruct adoption and implementation of contracts providing Iraq with food and medicine. For example, the representative of the United States of America opposes the provision of 100 ambulances to Iraq under the pretext that that is a large number — as if Iraq were a small country and not a State that has 22 million citizens. The United States representative also rejects contracts for medicine under the pretext that such contracts include free medical supplies, and also certain contracts for batteries and tires for the trucks that are used for the transport of food — claiming they are for dual use.

Even if the implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995) could continue in spite of the American and British obstacles, the provisions are insufficient to meet even the essential human needs of the Iraqi people. The average Iraqi would not have more than 25 cents today if that resolution were fully implemented. To date the resolution has only provided a small increase in Iraqi citizens' allotment of flour and rice. As Jesus Christ said, "Man does not live by bread alone." [*The Holy Bible, Matthew 4:4*]

The best and latest description of the implementation of resolution 986 (1995) is contained in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and World Food Programme report to which we referred a short while ago. That report states that despite the implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995)

> "malnutrition remains a serious problem throughout the country". [*Special Report, FAO/WFP Food Supply and Nutrition Assessment Mission to Iraq*, 3 October 1997, part 1]

It also says,

> "the situation for the majority of the population had become deplorable ... This remains true today." [ibid., part 5]

In the light of these judgements issued by United Nations bodies, can paragraph 89 of the Secretary-

General's report be in line with the formula of oil-for-food? That formula, according to the report, is

> "the first systematic attempt by the Council to address the humanitarian needs of the citizens of a civilian population in a country remaining subject to sanctions". [A/52/1, para. 89]

A realistic evaluation of the results of the oil-for-food programme is that it has actually become a programme making up for compensation and reparations for the United Nations. However, we wish to welcome the Secretary-General's call to the General Assembly and the Security Council to consider possible ways to render the sanctions less blunt and more effective.

As regards paragraph 125, we wish to say that the use of the word "military" to describe the mandate of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) is not correct or precise, because it is well known to all that resolution 687 (1991), which was adopted in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter, deals with measures for implementing post-conflict peace-building and does not deal with military actions.

As regards the obstruction of the movement of this Commission and its being prevented from reaching the positions concerned, we wish to clarify that Iraq has always asked for differentiation between the essential issues, especially those contained in resolutions such as resolution 687 (1991) and other, secondary ones. Iraq has always cooperated seriously and sincerely with the Special Commission and its inspection teams in the performance of their missions in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. The Commission has recognized this cooperation more than once in its semi-annual reports to the Security Council.

However, it is regrettable that the members of these inspection teams sometimes go beyond the functions of their missions as prescribed by the Security Council, a matter that led Iraq to establish a common, agreed programme of work with the Special Commission on 22 June 1996 in order to facilitate the work and modus operandi, especially when inspecting the sensitive areas in a manner that does not jeopardize the country's security. The intelligence building, for example, was inspected more than three times. When an inspection team asked to inspect a section inside that building, it was told that that section had nothing to do with the nature of the Commission's work.

It is regrettable that paragraph 125 selected only two situations and described them as negative, without putting them within the proper context to which we referred to earlier, and without balancing them against the positive and consistent record of Iraq's cooperation with the Special Commission and all its efforts in the implementation of its mandate as defined by the Security Council.

Allow us, in conclusion, to quote from the end of the last report of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), presented to the Security Council last month, in order to provide evidence of what we are stating here. The report states,

> "monitoring and verification activities carried out since April 1997 have not revealed indications of the existence in Iraq of prohibited materials or activities." [S/1997/779, para. 43]

Before that, the Executive Chairman of UNSCOM, in paragraph 46 of his report, presented to the Security Council in April 1997, referred to Iraq's commitment to the Security Council resolutions as follows:

> "The accumulated effect of the work that has been accomplished over six years since the ceasefire went into effect, between Iraq and the Coalition, is such that not much is unknown about Iraq's retained proscribed weapons capabilities." [S/1997/301, para. 46]

Undoubtedly, this unambiguously shows that Iraq is fully committed to complying with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, which makes the Council, in return, duty-bound to comply with the commitments it made to Iraq. The first of these is the application of operative paragraph 22 of resolution 687 (1991) regarding the lifting of the unjust economic siege against our country, in preparation for lifting the other sanctions against Iraq in order that it might return to its natural regional and international status, a matter that would preserve the interests of all and promote international peace and security.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): We thank the Secretary-General for presenting a concise, straight-to-the-point, yet comprehensive annual report on the work of the Organization. The new format has greatly facilitated our study of the report.

I wish to limit my remarks to a few specific observations, but first, as a general observation, we are pleased to note the numerous activities undertaken by the Secretariat in accordance with the mandates in the various fields outlined in the report, and we congratulate the Secretariat and the Secretary-General in this regard. The report also reflects the comprehensive and global mandate of the Organization, as well as the key role of the United Nations on issues of global concern.

Paragraph 16 suggests that globalization is the driving force for development, but also refers to the need for a more conducive external environment. We could not agree more with this assessment, inasmuch as the globalization process should not be considered as a panacea or a substitute for adopting international policies aimed at correcting fundamental economic imbalances and promoting international cooperation to ensure that the benefits of globalization are shared by as many as possible and not just a few. Effective international cooperation in key areas, such as international trade and finance and direct foreign investment, is still urgently needed.

At the same time, although section B deals with the issues of international economic cooperation and sustainable development — and we should take into account that the General Assembly has an agreed context in which the term "sustainable development" should be used — the report reflects, in our view, the creeping marginalization of the United Nations on development policy issues, despite the fact that the Agenda for Development was adopted earlier this year.

In this regard, the report emphasizes the issues of sustainable development — that is, environment and development operations. Important as these are, there is nevertheless scant, if any, reference or allusion to the United Nations activities, role or influence in the area of global macroeconomic decision-making and policies. Issues relating to international cooperation on core economic issues, such as finance, technology and investment, are insufficiently covered, if at all. We see this not as an omission on the part of the Secretary-General, but as a reflection of the state of affairs in the United Nations with regard to global development policy matters and core economic issues. Therefore, if the report's meagre coverage of these issues is a reflection of present-day realities in the United Nations, it is essential that States Members of this Organization correct this and restore real development policy issues and concerns to the heart of the United Nations agenda. Although the international policy context and setting may have changed as a result of the end of the cold war, continuing development challenges and problems remain.

On section D, concerning preventive diplomacy, we applaud the various initiatives undertaken by the Secretary-General in this regard. The Philippines fully recognizes the importance of preventing disputes from erupting into conflict. However, in considering this particular issue, the Secretary-General might also wish to take into account the fact that, after almost three years of negotiation, Member States have yet to agree on an operational definition for this concept. Nor has agreement been reached on the principles for the conduct of preventive diplomacy by the United Nations. We therefore urge that negotiations be resumed on this subject as soon as possible in order to avoid recurring misunderstanding and concerns on the activities undertaken by the United Nations in the name of preventive diplomacy.

At the same time, paragraph 79 of the report refers to the concept of preventive action. This term has not been considered by Member States. We therefore support the call of the Non-Aligned Movement, made during the debate on the Secretary-General's reform proposals, that the term "preventive action", at least with regard to its definition and operational principles, be discussed and considered by the General Assembly at the earliest date.

We are also interested in receiving details on the "global watch" referred to in paragraph 79. Is this the same as the early warning system? We are particularly interested in knowing the type and sources of data or information used to maintain this watch, as well as the criteria used to determine whether a particular situation could be classified as a threat to international peace and security. Greater transparency of this activity is essential.

We subscribe in general to the Secretary-General's conclusion in part III. However, we believe that the implications of the reforms suggested in paragraph 174 need to be studied carefully by the general membership. That paragraph suggests a reconfiguration of the balance of functions between the Organization's legislative bodies and the Secretary-General, and proposes a number of measures to create a balance between the General Assembly and the Secretary-General. Given the clear distinction provided in the Charter of the roles of the principal United Nations organs, this suggestion requires clarification and examination by this body.

Essentially, we believe that any reconfiguration in the balance of functions between the General Assembly and any other principal United Nations organ should aim at strengthening and not weakening or diluting the role and powers of the General Assembly as defined in the Charter of the United Nations. The views of my delegation on the specific measures referred to in this paragraph have been stated in the course of the discussions on the Secretary-General's reform proposals.

Finally, allow me once again to congratulate the Secretary-General for his report. We hope that future reports on the Work of the Organization will be presented with similar brevity and precision.

Mr. Londoño (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his very complete report, contained in document A/52/1.

The climate in the world today is one of integration, globalization and multilateral trade. Significant progress has been made in this respect and millions today enjoy better products, the modernization of their systems and a guiding vision for their aspirations to progress on the threshold of the coming millennium. Nonetheless, and as the Secretary-General has pointed out, not everyone enjoys the benefits of this new world climate. Continents like Africa share a meagre 4 per cent of direct foreign investment.

This statistic is unwelcome from any standpoint; it reflects the assertion that we need to be aware and to understand that any interest in national well-being which lacks a global consciousness can lead to a balance sheet that may be positive in the short term, but in the long run is imbalanced for all humanity. In his report, the Secretary-General refers to the need to combine pro-growth policies at the national level with targeted external assistance as an effective means of achieving the development of the least developed countries.

In spite of valiant efforts, a great deal needs to be done with regard to rules for conventional weapons, especially light arms. Therefore, efforts to halt their proliferation must be stepped up, both within conflicts themselves and where conflicts are rooted. As has been pointed out, these weapons are the cause of many violent deaths.

My delegation considers it necessary to make an important clarification regarding statements on the increase of human rights activities in field operations as a direct result of decisions adopted by the Security Council in this field.

Paragraph 31 of the Secretary-General's report states that operations of this nature exist in Colombia. On this point, it must be made very clear that the opening of an office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was never the result of a decision of the Security Council. On the contrary, it arose from a proposal made by the Colombian Government itself, which had the support and full welcome of the Organization's relevant human rights bodies, in particular the Commission on Human Rights.

This is therefore not a matter of a decision imposed by the Security Council, but rather of an innovative procedure to help in the promotion and protection of human rights in Colombia as a part of the resolute commitment of the Colombian authorities to defend these rights.

We commend the efforts of the Organization with regard to the maintenance of peace.

The report of the Secretary-General is a valuable document for Member States which summarizes the efforts, results and work left to be done by all.

Mr. Türk (Slovenia): We have studied the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization with keen interest. The report gives a concise overview of United Nations activities and offers a comprehensive picture of the current developments within the Organization.

The delegation of Slovenia commends the Secretary-General for the clarity and conciseness of the report, as well as for its early availability. This helped focus the general debate at the beginning of this session of the General Assembly. Today we are required to concentrate on those questions which need to be considered in order to help the progress of the current session and the taking of the necessary decisions.

In his general statement on the current situation of the Organization and the Organization's steps ahead, in paragraph 167, the Secretary-General expresses prudent optimism. We share this sentiment. The Organization is doing useful work; it is active in the efforts to adjust and adapt to the changing international environment and is demonstrating a real capacity for the necessary innovation. Much of this is to the credit of the Secretary-

General, who has offered a number of specific and well thought out proposals for reform. Those proposals represent an important complement to the specific decisions and actions of the Organization in its daily work and a valuable contribution to the Organization's dynamism.

On the other hand, it has to be recognized that the current situation of the United Nations, both its internal situation and its role in the changing world, is far from what the majority of United Nations Members would consider desirable, let alone perfect. The discrepancy between needs and expectations on the one hand, and the actual performance of the Organization on the other, undoubtedly exists. It is important that we understand the reasons for this discrepancy and equally important that we try to make specific proposals which will diminish it.

There are, in our opinion, three basic reasons for the difficulties which need to be addressed during the present discussion. They are, first, the extent of change in the international environment; secondly, the inherently demanding character of the most important tasks of the United Nations; and thirdly, the less than perfect level of cooperation among the United Nations Member States.

Allow me to briefly address those three sets of questions and to start with a few words on the nature of the ongoing change in the world.

In the first part of the report, the Secretary-General describes the "contours of the new era" and explains that today, as in all transitional periods, different expressions of the human predicament coexist in an uneasy tension: globalization and particularism, zones of prosperity and large pockets of poverty, areas of peace and areas of unprecedented violence. These circumstances have a profound bearing on the tasks of the United Nations today.

The dissolution of the previous international order and some aspects of the current processes of globalization have contributed to the strengthening of the tendencies of social and political disintegration. As the Secretary-General correctly states in paragraph 16 of the report,

> "The same technological means that foster globalization and the transnational expansion of civil society also provide the infrastructure for expanding global networks of ... organized crime, ... money launderers and terrorists." [A/52/1, para. 16]

It can be added that the uneven character of global economic progress resulted in the concentration of direct foreign investment in a small number of countries. Large parts of the world, notably Africa, are left out. Inadequate economic progress is adding to political instability and to the outbreak of armed conflicts.

These and other changes in the international environment represent a challenge to all international organizations, which have to adjust their activities and structures to the new needs. If the United Nations is compared with other international organizations in this context, it can be said that the United Nations efforts to adjust are among the most serious ones. Furthermore, it has to be recognized that the United Nations is left with some of the most difficult tasks. The expectations of the international community must be measured against a realistic understanding of the real power of the United Nations.

The responsibilities placed on the United Nations in such areas as crisis management, development assistance, human rights and crime prevention are indeed weighty and, regrettably, often unaccompanied by the necessary assistance of States. Effective international cooperation requires effective Member States. As pointed out in paragraph 10 of the report, an effective State is crucial for success in development. We would add to this that an effective and enlightened role of the State is critical for the international management of the global processes of change. States must demonstrate, within the activities of the United Nations, that they understand this requirement and that they are able to live up to it.

Let me now proceed to my second set of remarks, concerning the demanding character of some of the most important tasks of the United Nations today.

An enlightened and effective role of the State requires that good governance, human rights and democratization are understood as fundamental tasks. We welcome the placement of these tasks in the second part of the report and we largely agree with the content of the relevant paragraphs, 22 to 41, of the report.

The current United Nations activities in the field of human rights confirm and emphasize the universality of human rights. Indeed, universality is the very essence of the concept and of the legal definition of human rights. However, the notion of universality does not require uniformity in the implementation of the universally valid concepts of human rights. In the implementation there has to be scope for specificity and a margin of appreciation in devising the specific measures necessary for the

effective implementation of the universal norms of human rights.

On the other hand, universality requires that the United Nations human rights agenda remain truly global. In this context, we agree with the Secretary-General, who emphasizes in his report such areas of work as United Nations assistance for the strengthening of the judiciary worldwide and the need to combat discrimination against women and to eliminate violence against them. We would like to add that combating racial discrimination must remain among the top priorities of the United Nations human rights agenda.

Finally, the human rights activities of the United Nations must be provided with more resources and become better integrated with the United Nations activities in the domain of economic and social development.

In the sections of the report devoted to international economic cooperation and sustainable development and to development operations, the Secretary-General provides an overview which shows the areas of progress as well as the problems encountered. He rightly points to the unfavourable trends in official development assistance which,

> "cast a serious shadow over the development prospects of lower income countries" [ibid., para. 47].

The negative trends with respect to official development assistance are among the factors which give rise to serious concern.

Another reason for concern is the relatively slow progress in the implementation of commitments agreed to at the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995. Both official development assistance and the implementation of commitments and specific targets in the field of social development require an effective and enlightened role of the State. Without the improved performance of States, little can be expected to take place in the improvement of the situation in the least developed countries or in the strengthening of world social development.

It is important in this context to understand that the success or failure of the United Nations development activities hinges on the question of development in Africa. There is no meaningful global development strategy without a meaningful and effective strategy for development in Africa. The initiatives to which the Secretary-General refers in paragraph 47 of his report are welcome and necessary. If they succeed and a new partnership between developed and developing countries is established, then and only then would we be in a position to say that the answer to the question of global development has been found.

Furthermore, there is an urgent need to address the problem of development as a factor among the sources of conflict in Africa and to lay the ground for a durable peace and economic growth in Africa, as requested by the Security Council at its ministerial meeting in September this year. A prosperous and politically stable Africa will contribute to global peace and security. We look forward to the relevant recommendations of the Secretary-General, which the Security Council requested from him.

I wish to conclude with a few remarks regarding cooperation among States for an improved organization of the United Nations. Here again the effectiveness and the enlightened character of States are put to the test. At present this test consists of three clearly definable questions: first, the question of the financing of the United Nations; secondly, the question of reforms proposed by the Secretary-General; and thirdly, the question of the most politically demanding reforms, including the reform of the Security Council.

An effective and responsible approach to the question of the financing of the United Nations — the first of the three questions — requires that outstanding contributions by Member States be paid in full and that in future they be paid in full and on time. Reaching agreement on the scale of assessments should not be allowed to become an insurmountable problem.

As regards the agreement on the proposals for reform put forward by the Secretary-General, that should be seen as an opportunity to develop a new partnership among Member States for a better United Nations. For that to become possible, the narrow interests of individual States or groups of States should give way to the understanding of the common need and common purpose of the Organization.

Thirdly, such an understanding of the importance of the majority of proposals for reform would represent something valuable per se and, not less importantly, a condition which would enable the Organization to achieve success in the most demanding aspects of reform, including the reform of the Security Council. While it is

clear that the time for definitive decisions regarding the reform of the Security Council has not yet come and that resolutions which might imply the contrary should be avoided. it also has become clear that immediate progress in matters of the financing of the United Nations and in the areas of reform proposed by the Secretary-General would considerably improve the prospects for a meaningful reform of the Security Council. I think that this is one of the most important matters to be kept in mind at the present stage of this session of the General Assembly.

Let me conclude by saying that these are some thoughts which come to mind when studying the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization. The discussion of the report provides an opportunity for the General Assembly, in the middle of the session, to take a look at the state of the United Nations from a broader perspective and to enable itself to take the necessary decisions. It is our hope that the current discussion will, in that manner, contribute to the success of the reform efforts and help the General Assembly to take decisions where decisions are needed.

Mr. Valle (Brazil): It is with particular satisfaction that I take the floor to welcome the first report on the work of the Organization presented by Secretary-General Kofi Annan. We believe that this year's annual report constitutes a straightforward document which fulfils the goal of highlighting the most significant aspects of the Organization's activity during the course of the previous year in a refreshing and concise manner. We commend the Secretary-General and his staff for having provided us with a sharply focused text that helps us to reflect on the challenges that lie ahead, on the basis of recent experience.

The Secretary-General's analysis of what he calls "the contours of the new era" is a lucid attempt to capture in suspended animation the essential elements of what continues to be a quickly shifting international environment, as regards both economic and political trends. It should not come as a surprise that the picture which emerges is fraught with contradictions. Unprecedented wealth and economic growth coexist with extreme forms of poverty. While democracy makes significant inroads, multiple forms of tyranny and intolerance continue to threaten individual freedoms. Although the prospects for peace have seldom been more encouraging, a number of seemingly intractable conflicts continue to exclude various regions of the world from the more beneficial aspects of globalization.

The thematic overview of achievements in the main areas of activity over the past year in the report's Chapter II brings to the forefront the fundamental topics of international economic cooperation and sustainable development. We are pleased to note that the report has acknowledged the adoption of an Agenda for Development by the General Assembly as "a major event". In our view, the negotiations which led to its adoption represented a groundbreaking exercise in helping to organize a conceptual framework for dealing with the complex relationships among development, peace, democracy, good governance and human rights. Having overcome the ideological confrontation of previous eras, we should expect no less than a new consensus on economic development. We agree with the Secretary-General when he states that

> "An important task ... for the years ahead will be to develop forms of partnership between developed and developing countries — partnerships that meet the needs and aspirations of developing countries and are also consistent with global and economic conditions and attitudes." [A/52/1, para. 47]

The work carried out by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in examining the relationship between globalization and development deserves to be highlighted in this context, and should continue to aim at promoting a fuller integration of developing countries into the international trading system, with the support of all Member States.

Five years after the Rio Conference on Environment and Development, the special session of the General Assembly which took place last June has contributed to raising the level of awareness regarding the areas where progress has been insufficient. The need for financial and technological support to developing countries in their efforts to pursue environmental goals remains a priority, even as cooperative strategies are sought in such key areas as climate change. This year's report presents with particular clarity the multifaceted and intersectoral nature of the concerns addressed both in the Agenda for Development and at the special session of the General Assembly. Institutional improvements under way deserve the political support of Member States so that current efforts at integrating the Organization's analytical and normative functions in the economic and social spheres may help regional and national efforts to generate positive repercussions worldwide.

In Latin America and the Caribbean mutually reinforcing prospects for economic growth and vigorous democracy have established a solid basis for trade-induced integration, setting the stage for continuous peace and development. Such encouraging signs are visible in many regions, and it is our belief that the United Nations has greatly contributed to promoting such changes and can do more in the years to come, with the active support of the international community.

Of immediate relevance, of course, is the role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security in those areas where it remains under threat. While not intending to present views on United Nations activities with respect to specific conflicts, I would nevertheless like to make a few comments on the coverage of certain security issues in this year's report.

The topic of sanctions is one which has generated considerable interest in recent years, as increasing resort to this tool has underlined the need to limit its unintended effects and ensure it is properly targeted. While we agree that sanctions can permit the United Nations "to bring pressure to bear without recourse to force", as stated in paragraph 89, we question the appropriateness of addressing the issue in a subchapter entitled "Preventive diplomacy, peaceful settlement of disputes and disarmament". As stated in annex II of resolution 51/242, by which the General Assembly adopted the texts approved by the Informal Open-ended Working Group on an Agenda for Peace,

> "As Security Council action under Chapter VII, sanctions are a matter of utmost seriousness and concern". [resolution 51/242, annex II, para. 1]

To include sanctions in a section of the report which deals essentially with Chapter VI efforts seems to us misleading.

The following subchapter, dealing with humanitarian action, describes the growing interest and involvement of the Security Council in humanitarian questions as a welcome and timely development. This affirmation requires some qualification. It would have been worth recalling, for instance, that a presidential statement of the Security Council was issued, as document S/PRST/1997/34, on the question of "Protection for humanitarian assistance to refugees and others in conflict situations", which reflects the sentiment of the Council on this question. Our own position, as presented to the Council in the open debate that took place on 21 May under the presidency of the Republic of Korea, can be summarized as follows: if the Security Council is to be expected to play a more active role in guaranteeing safe conditions for humanitarian assistance, our preference is for such endeavours to be attempted in parallel with multilaterally defined diplomatic agendas and within the realm of the possibilities offered by Chapter VI — that of the pacific settlement of disputes. Furthermore, it is necessary to preserve the role of the General Assembly in the humanitarian domain whenever international security is not the overriding concern. In addition, we must ensure adequate coordination between the relevant United Nations bodies and other agencies, in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian assistance.

The chapter on peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building refers to the phenomenon of what is coming to be seen by some delegations as an exaggerated reluctance on the part of the Security Council to contemplate the creation of new peacekeeping operations. While not defending a return to the patterns of 1993 and 1994, the report seems to echo a widespread apprehension to the effect that errors can also be made in the opposite direction. This is a question worth pondering. Peacekeeping operations remain an effective instrument for the promotion of international peace when resorted to with the necessary caution and given the appropriate political conditions. In the absence of such conditions, precipitate action or misguided decisions can erode the Organization's credibility. As arrangements for standby readiness are perfected and other organizational improvements are conceived, it will be necessary to reflect on the possibilities and limitations of peacekeeping in the current international scene.

We have repeatedly stressed the significance of peace-building efforts for the consolidation of peace. But it might be useful, from a conceptual point of view and in terms of presentation as well, to differentiate between reconstruction or technical assistance carried out with the consent of the parties on the one hand, and activities carried out under Chapter VII, such as those of the United Nations Special Commission or of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda, on the other. To discuss the latter and the former as part of a continuum, as is the case in the report, glosses over the fundamental difference in the nature of what is being attempted in each case and tends to minimize the seriousness of those exceptional circumstances required for the authorization of enforcement measures.

The Secretary-General's report is correct in stressing multilateralism: an opportunity, in short, for peace and sustainable development. As we prepare ourselves to manage a changing international environment, we must confront the need for renewal and reform. We therefore take the occasion offered by the democratic debate on the annual report on the work of the Organization to welcome once again the many constructive proposals for reform submitted by the Secretary-General, and to reaffirm our readiness to promote the necessary degree of agreement on the reform of other vital areas of the United Nations in order to fully equip the Organization to play its part in the twenty-first century.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Through you, Sir, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his thought-provoking report on the work of the United Nations during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. It is thought-provoking because rather than confining itself to a list of facts it describes the forces that have transformed the world since the cold war, the way in which the United Nations has reacted, and the ways and means of successfully confronting the new realities.

We share the basic premise that we live in a world of contradictions: integration and globalization coexist with fragmentation and marginalization; computer science, while a source of progress, is also facilitating the expansion of transnational criminal networks, drug trafficking, money laundering and terrorism; greater awareness of environmental problems is not accompanied by the political will to find satisfactory solutions; and despite the strengthening of democracy, extremely serious violations of human rights continue to be committed.

The Secretary-General has given us his response to these dualities: that these problems cannot be resolved in isolation, but need to be approached in a comprehensive way, combining the essential element of peace and security with sustainable development, democracy and good governance. The United Nations must therefore undertake the reforms necessary for an integrated approach to be reflected in its actions.

It is from that viewpoint that we wish to comment on the report of the Secretary-General. We shall focus on tasks in three areas: sustainable development, the protection of human rights, and the maintenance of international peace and security.

In a world characterized by major disparities in income and in access to services and opportunities, we value the efforts of United Nations funds and programmes to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable human development. The resources available to those funds and programmes are, however, limited. One of the paradoxes of our day is the reduction in official development assistance. The situation requires, first and foremost, that resources be carefully managed so that they will be allocated to those really in need. It also requires thought on the role to be played by the United Nations in this area, and particularly vis-à-vis other development agencies that have greater resources. The Secretary-General is aware of this situation, and proposes solutions in paragraphs 77 and 174 of the report. Argentina supports these efforts aimed at improving the cost-benefit ratio of these activities.

We particularly agree with the Secretary-General that good governance is an essential requirement for sustainable development. We are pleased that the United Nations Development Programme allocates some of its resources to this field.

Sustainable development also requires that the needs of the world population be met without affecting the environment. Expectations regarding the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, on the review of the implementation of Agenda 21, were not entirely met. Nonetheless, that conference made it possible for us to be aware of the scant progress achieved in the fulfilment of the commitments undertaken in Rio de Janeiro. This fact, together with the active role played by non-governmental organizations, should encourage us to persevere in our efforts.

In the post-cold-war world, the protection of human rights is an element that is inseparably linked to international peace and security. We agree with the Secretary-General about the importance of incorporating the promotion of human rights into peacekeeping operations. A lasting peace can be built only on the basis of democratic regimes. In this context, we attach great importance to the monitoring of electoral processes under the auspices of the United Nations. The best evidence of the value that States attach to the legitimacy of democratic processes is reflected, as the Secretary-General tells us, by the fact that in the past five years the United Nations has received some 80 requests for electoral assistance. Argentina has cooperated and will continue to cooperate enthusiastically in these missions and in other tasks in support of the establishment and consolidation of democratic systems.

The maintenance of peace and security is the fundamental and irreplaceable role of the United Nations. If that role is not ensured, no other activity can be conducted effectively. All countries, regardless of their size and to the extent of their capacities, should feel themselves to be participants in the effort to maintain peace and security.

Argentina is gratified by the fact that for 40 years now it has contributed to peacekeeping operations and that it has participated in over half of them. In this context, we believe it is very important that the mandates that the Security Council gives to these operations be as clear and precise as possible. But in order to have mandates that meet these conditions, it is necessary first of all to grasp the profound change that has taken place in the nature of conflicts. Today these are, for the most part, intra-State conflicts, and they are accompanied by grave humanitarian situations.

Secondly, these new conflicts require greater sensitivity on the part of the Security Council. That sensitivity can be produced only through a more profound and direct knowledge of the realities in the countries affected and of the overall circumstances prevailing in the regions where the conflicts occur. These comments apply in particular to the subject of sanctions and their negative impact on civilian populations. All this needs to be studied, as is pointed out by the Secretary-General.

What is needed, therefore, is greater transparency, more fluid relations with the General Assembly, continuing dialogue with all countries concerned and, where required, a role for non-governmental organizations whose experience may be useful. Combining effectiveness in the work of the Security Council with transparency in its procedures should not be difficult at a time when democracy is spreading in almost all countries. We believe that only in this way will we be able to implement the recommendations of the Secretary-General.

We are also of the opinion that in the future the Organization should apply the lessons learned in joint deployment with regional organizations and that it should explore the possibilities of renewed use of Chapter VIII of the Charter.

In a different context, as was recently stated by Foreign Minister Di Tella before this Assembly:

> "A lasting peace requires United Nations contingents endowed with the capacity to deploy rapidly and effectively." [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 10th meeting, p. 15]

I wish to recall that Argentina supports initiatives to improve the deployment time of troops, is a party to the stand-by force agreements and has joined the Danish Stand-by Forces High-Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG) initiative.

As a complement to peacekeeping operations, we have conflict-prevention and peace-building activities. In connection with the former, without impinging on sensitive matters of States, the United Nations should strengthen a system of early warning. As regards the latter, the cessation of armed conflict is a necessary condition, but is not enough for the establishment of a just and lasting peace.

In this context, I wish to mention the "White Helmets". The relevance that this body has acquired reflects the tasks it has carried out and the greater awareness of countries regarding the importance of acting in rapid and integral fashion. The new missions that the "White Helmets" have begun to carry out in Angola, Haiti and Palestine encourage us to call for the international community to participate actively in this initiative.

In respect of disarmament, relevant steps have been taken. We would like to highlight the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, efforts to provide the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction with an effective verification mechanism, and progress in the area of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Now of concern is the proliferation of small and light arms, because their dissemination heightens intra-State conflict. Furthermore, there should be an institutional link drawn between questions of peace and security and disarmament issues in order to fulfil the essential role of the United Nations more effectively.

We particularly value the support given by the Secretary-General to the Ottawa process. Argentina will sign the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use,

Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction next December, and will continue to work for total prohibition.

This is the first report of the current Secretary-General on the work of the Organization. It reflects the vision of a statesman. It transmits the experience acquired in the Secretariat, where there are so many examples of selfless dedication to the cause of peace. We are convinced that the reforms proposed, which we will steadily be implementing on the basis of consensus, will direct the Organization towards the twenty-first century.

Mr. Reyn (Belgium) (*interpretation from French*): I would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his efforts in preparing and presenting a month and a half ago the report we are considering today in the General Assembly.

Everyone will agree that this document is of indisputable interest. The description of the activities of the United Nations make it possible to better assess the place and the activities of our Organization in the context of the great changes in the world. Furthermore, the report gives the Secretary-General the opportunity to introduce the means for restoring dynamism to the United Nations, the dynamism that world public opinion expects of it.

The concise drafting of the report and its presentation by the Secretary-General in person at the beginning of this session of the General Assembly contributed to making the ministerial debate more specific. That was a successful innovation, and my delegation thanks those who made it possible.

In my opinion, the most important message of the report remains the acknowledgement that the new global environment demands far-reaching adaptation by the United Nations, as well as the fact that the Secretary-General is fully prepared to work vigorously along those lines.

As the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs stated here,

> "It is clear that the way in which we organize ourselves as a world community is of the utmost importance for questions of war and peace, poverty and wealth, and justice and injustice in the world" [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 12th meeting, p. 29]

My delegation fully supports the Secretary-General's intention to transform the United Nations into an Organization that is simpler, more integrated and more focused, one that is capable of carrying out its mission in its different fields with maximum synergy and effectiveness.

The reform proposals are even more deserving of our support, as they are part of a restructuring initiative that is sufficiently global, aimed at adapting the entire Organization to the requirements of the modern world. Such a process calls for the resolute commitment of all Member States and deserves a rapid and unequivocal collective response.

On the basis of such a positive response we will be able to give greater dynamism to the relationships between the principal intergovernmental bodies: the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. It is also on the basis of that response that a better balance should be found among those bodies. And it is on the basis of that response that we will be able better to develop the essential links between the political tasks and the development work of the United Nations and to design the global role of an Organization whose central elements are progress in respect for human rights and in respect for international law.

Several other aspects of the report also deserve to be highlighted. First, as the Secretary-General notes, the new world environment demands more systematic cooperation between the United Nations and all the other actors that are working to promote political and economic security at all levels, whether they are regional organizations or even non-State actors.

The Secretary-General also emphasizes the extreme gravity of the financial situation of the United Nations. Belgium agrees that any reform effort will be in vain if the fundamental need to give the Organization a more appropriate and reliable financial basis is neglected. It is high time to stop the use of interim measures in both the management of the Organization and the search for lasting solutions.

Finally, the reform of the Security Council is another of those exercises demanded by the overall reform of this Organization. This delicate matter must be judged on its own merits; we should avoid both unproductive confrontation and the definitive deferment of this fundamental aspect of reform.

The report of the Secretary-General deals with a great many other issues that I have not addressed. I wished simply to highlight those that seemed to me essential; that, however, does not in any way diminish the importance of the other aspects of the report. The report provides a very useful framework for action by the Organization and the work of this session of our Assembly. I should again like to thank the Secretary-General, and I hope that he will follow the same approach next year in presenting his report.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): My delegation continues to maintain that the debate pertaining to the item under current consideration, agenda item 10, entitled "Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization", should, as in the past, remain an item of priority deliberation. We believe that this item deserves to be considered early during the work of the General Assembly to signify the importance of this report. After all, it is one of the Charter-mandated reports, constituting an important and integral element of the work of the General Assembly, as stipulated in Article 98 of the Charter.

Mr. Zacharakis (Greece), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We wish to commend the Secretary-General for his maiden annual report, which has been submitted in a concise and refreshingly readable form. It is our hope that this reporting format will be retained and that the temptation for lengthy annual reports in future will be resisted. We readily agree that in considering this year's report, due account needs to be taken of the Secretary-General's reform proposals contained in the relevant documents and of his oral statement at the beginning of this session.

While my delegation welcomes the format of the report, containing three chapters and eight sub-chapters, we would like to suggest that the report continue to contain the data pertaining to the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. It should be recalled that last year many delegations requested that future annual reports include information on the status of the implementation of resolutions and decisions, as they form the basis of the intergovernmental mandate to the Secretariat for action. My delegation would in particular like to be apprised of problems at the implementation stage so as to enable the intergovernmental process to review and re-evaluate the decisions it had taken.

In outlining the "Contours of the new era" in the first chapter, the United Nations Secretary-General has outlined seven fundamental forces "reshaping the world today" [A/52/1, para. 6]. He has rightly focused on globalization as one of these forces. In paragraphs 6 to 11 he has succinctly highlighted the benefits and challenges of globalization. I wish in particular to refer to paragraph 8, which reads,

> "Globalization also poses numerous policy challenges, however. Among them are the inherent risks of markets lacking critical regulatory safeguards, as is true in some respects of international financial markets. Globalization is also eroding the efficacy of some policy instruments by which the industrialized countries had pursued full employment and social stability throughout the era that followed the Second World War." [Ibid., para. 8]

For the East Asian region, which has been subjected to extreme volatility of currency and stock markets, the urgent need for critical regulatory safeguards in respect of international financial markets is unambiguous. The United Nations should contribute to the international efforts to arrive at critical regulatory safeguards.

On the issue of international economic cooperation, sustained economic growth and sustainable development, we note the Secretary-General's assurances that this issue will remain at the core of the Organization's agenda. Nevertheless the critical challenge is to operationalize the collective commitments made at the United Nations and at the various global conferences, particularly the financial commitments. We must arrest the accelerating slide towards a diminishing role for the United Nations on development issues, especially on issues of trade and development financing. While good governance at the national level is critical, we cannot ignore or sideline the importance of a supportive international environment. It may be timely to seriously consider the need for the Secretary-General to attend the key and annual meetings of the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization.

We agree with the Secretary-General that democracy at the national level should continue to be promoted and expanded. However, it is disquieting that the report is silent on the important principle of democracy among nations, which should be promoted by our Organization on the basis of the principle of the sovereign equality of States.

In respect of human rights, my delegation takes note of the Secretary-General's assessment as contained in the report. While the core human rights activities of the United Nations had taken on renewed strength after the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, as the Secretary-General correctly observed, progress in the implementation of the right to development, which is recognized by the Declaration as indivisible and an integral part of human rights is far from satisfactory. There are still many obstacles, especially at the international level, which have impeded, and can impede, its full realization. It is therefore critical for the international community to inject renewed interest and a spirit of cooperation in overcoming these obstacles.

In this connection, my delegation would also like to emphasize the need for all countries, regardless of their level of economic development, to expand, enhance and contribute to the exchange of knowledge and experiences in the field of human rights. We have much to learn from each other. It is our view that the Secretary-General and, especially, the High Commissioner for Human Rights have an important role to play in promoting this spirit of cooperation and should not be perceived as promoting the interests of certain groups. My delegation also believes that the establishment of a separate new branch with commensurate levels of services and resources to deal specifically with the right to development is necessary under the proposed consolidation of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights.

Next year, 1998, will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It will also be five years since the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. This is indeed an opportune time to take stock of the substantial progress made in the field of human rights. We must reject the exploitation of human rights for self-serving reasons, evident in the double standards and selectivity which have characterized the annual meetings of the Commission on Human Rights. At the same time, there should also be greater candour and honesty about our failures, which have indeed been considerable, as attested to by the mounds of human remains and pools of blood we have witnessed on our television screens and documented in various reports which will haunt us all for ever as human beings.

On the question of disarmament, my delegation has always believed that the Organization could fully exercise its potential to play a more significant and prominent role. This role could be built upon the existing multilateral disarmament treaties and conventions, as well as through close cooperation with regional organizations. However, in spite of some positive developments in the area of arms regulation and disarmament in the past year, we cannot be too sanguine about these achievements in the absence of any real or substantial progress made in the area of the further reduction of nuclear weapons leading to their total elimination. The failure of the Conference on Disarmament to make further progress at its 1997 session is clear testimony to this. Despite numerous calls by the international community, the threat posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons persists, hovering like the proverbial sword of Damocles over mankind.

My delegation shares the concern over the increasing threat of illicit transfers of small arms and light weapons, especially to conflict areas. Effective steps should be taken to address this issue from the core — that is, to limit the production and acquisitions of such weapons only to the legitimate security requirements of States. Similarly, greater attention should be given to the increasing availability of more technologically advanced and sophisticated conventional weapons. The drive for higher profits derived from the supply of those weapons, particularly to the developing countries, has threatened regional security and hampered confidence-building efforts. In this regard, we would welcome any effort to strengthen and broaden the scope of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, as we believe it would contribute to enhancing transparency.

As events in many parts of the world have continued to demonstrate, the role of the United Nations in peacekeeping in all its aspects is critical to the promotion of peace and development. We fully concur with the observation in the report that,

> "Though peace is far less costly than war, there should be no illusion that it can be achieved on the cheap." [A/52/1, para. 110]

On the question of preventive diplomacy and peaceful settlement of disputes, my delegation would like to reiterate the necessity that such activities continue to be undertaken within the provisions of the United Nations Charter and the mandate given to the world body. My delegation also welcomes the adoption of General Assembly resolution 51/242 regarding the recommendation concerning the Informal Open-ended Working Group on An Agenda for Peace. It is unfortunate, however, that the General Assembly is unable, as yet, to successfully conclude the work of the

subgroups on preventive diplomacy and peacemaking and post-conflict peace-building, signalling the inability of Member States to move ahead on critical issues relevant to many of the affected States.

Although supportive of United Nations efforts aimed at preventing conflicts or the escalation of conflicts, my delegation is concerned about the indiscriminate use of the term "preventive action" appearing in a number of United Nations publications, including the report of the Secretary-General on a programme for reform contained in document A/51/950. The concept clearly requires further clarification and certainly deliberated upon by the General Assembly. At the same time, my delegation shares the view that Member States must come to grips with the real problems on the ground, while maintaining the fundamental principles of inter-State relations as enshrined in the Charter.

My delegation expresses its serious concern at the increasing number of attacks on humanitarian personnel and the numerous barriers placed in the way of their access to populations in distress. Any attack on humanitarian action negates the very foundations of assistance and protection work. This growing problem calls for a more comprehensive and concerted international response and assistance.

On the issue of transnational threats, Malaysia shares the concern over the exploitation of modern technology by "uncivil society" to enhance their illegal activities. This transboundary nature of current criminal activities indeed poses a serious threat to the well-being of the international community, both the Member States and the peoples of the world. In this regard, my delegation welcomes all efforts to enhance international cooperation against transnational threats, including addressing the drug menace.

I cannot conclude my statement without reference to the precarious financial health of the Organization. As of 30 September 1997, the Organization was owed $2.417 billion for the regular budget, peacekeeping budget and the budgets for the international tribunals. It is regrettable that the major contributor accounted for 60 per cent of all amounts owed to the Organization. Failure to pay or withholding mandatory contributions constitutes a direct attack on United Nations programmes and action. It is unfortunate that as a result of late payments or non-payment, the United Nations had to resort to borrowing from the already depleted peacekeeping account to cover the shortfall. Malaysia and many others, despite being up to date in their assessed contributions, have in fact been penalized by not being reimbursed for providing troops and equipment to the various United Nations peacekeeping operations. We therefore appeal to all Member States to fulfil in good faith their mandatory contributions to the United Nations in full, on time and without conditions.

Mrs. Cornette (Guyana): My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his concise report on the work of the United Nations over the past year. Certainly, it makes us more aware of how global events, particularly in the developing countries, have had an impact on us. We can reflect on those activities which took place at the United Nations over the past year so that, in the reform process in which we are now engaged, we can seek to make the Organization more capable of dealing with these changes.

Guyana shares the concerns of all the Member States that are concerned with the problems that have surfaced in the globalization process. We are pleased to note that the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has been examining the relationships between globalization and development and that the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean has been examining the compatibility between international trade and a more open international system. We hope that these findings will be made available for review by the General Assembly.

With the trend towards globalization, developing countries are in danger of having the gains they have made in areas such as trade negated. This comes at a time when we are still grappling with the poverty issue and means of resolving it. It would be wise, therefore, to pay particular attention to the 1997 *World Economic and Social Survey*, which concludes that less affluent countries require a more favourable external economic environment than currently exists.

All States have recognized the need for partnership for development. It is only through partnership with developed countries, and with the United Nations, that developing countries will be able to improve their economic situation. All actors involved must recognize the special challenges faced by developing counties and work together towards resolving them. By doing so, it is possible for the world to reach the goal of peace and stability worldwide. The universal institution of the United Nations is most suited to the task of fostering such international cooperation.

Internal strife has exacerbated the poverty issue in many developing countries, which at this time also have to contend with the effects of globalization. The decision of the United Nations to strengthen its global watch so that threats to international peace and security might be detected early, and dealt with, would help Member States to devote greater efforts to dealing with other challenges.

A few external conflicts still remain unresolved. In what remains one of the most troubled areas, the Middle East, the fact that the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly is being convened for the third time with the aim of resolving some of the issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict indicates that the situation remains volatile. We hope that in the coming year greater effort will be devoted to working with the parties concerned in the Middle East and elsewhere so that differences can be resolved.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development has succeeded in integrating matters of an economic, social and environmental nature with the aim of achieving sustainable development. One of the major events this year was its five-year review. The finding that the state of the environment continues to deteriorate does not augur well for developing countries whose economic viability is heavily reliant on a healthy physical environment. Now that the Commission on Sustainable Development is in a better position to identify priorities, we hope that developing countries will be able to benefit from the assistance necessary to enable them to respond better to the more pressing issues hampering their sustainable development goals.

Developing countries need to be better prepared to cope with the challenges which a changing world environment presents, while simultaneously adopting effective measures to address internal issues which hamper sustainable development. The Secretary-General's reform proposals, when adopted, should better enable the United Nations to assist developing countries in attaining their priority goals.

As the Secretary-General's report observes, adequate financing is essential for implementing United Nations programmes and activities. Private capital flows have been selective and promises of official development assistance have not been realized. United Nations funds and programmes have become the most reliable source of funding. The United Nations has yet to find satisfactory solutions to the question of financing. We hope, therefore, that in the future, the United Nations will give this the priority consideration it deserves.

Overall, this first report of the new Secretary-General has assured us that the Organization is in capable hands. We share its prudent optimism and are willing to work with him to make the United Nations better able to serve its Member States.

Mr. Takht-Ravanchi (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the very outset, let me express, on behalf of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report on the work of the Organization, as contained in document A/52/1. We find the report informative, analytical and useful.

In the introductory part of the report, the Secretary-General provides a panoramic view of the most significant changes that have shaped world affairs in the course of the past decade and still continue to unfold, the collapse of the bipolar world and ascendancy of the twin processes of globalization and liberalization being the two most fundamental factors. The report's treatment of the far-reaching implications of the ongoing transformations and further unfolding changes, particularly for the developing world and the additional challenges they have to face, is also interesting.

We agree with the overall objectives enumerated in paragraph 2 of the report and believe that the whole international community should strive towards a more secure and predictable peace, greater economic well-being, social justice and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, we concur with the view that individual nations can hardly achieve these lofty objectives on their own and, hence, we recognize the desirability as much as the inevitability of collective efforts at the global level, which in our time are best embodied in the form of the United Nations.

Cognizant of the magnitude of the changes just referred to, as well as of the imperative of reform and adaptation, we wish the Secretary-General the utmost success in achieving greater unity of purpose, coherence of efforts and responsiveness throughout the United Nations to meet the challenges of our time effectively. We share the Secretary-General's hope that the Organization will remain a vital and effective instrument of international cooperation in the years and decades to come.

Having made these general comments by way of introduction, I would like to make a number of observations on some aspects of the Organization's work, especially in the light of the still ongoing reform process. I underline, however, that as our views on various elements of the Secretary-General's reform proposals have been raised, in detail, in the course of current deliberations on reform within the framework of the Open-ended Informal Consultations of the Plenary, our exposé here will be limited merely to a few select areas.

First I turn to disarmament. We believe that disarmament, as a top priority on the United Nations agenda, should preserve its significance and relevance to international peace and security. We concur with the Secretary-General that, in the past year, significant progress has been made in the field of disarmament and arms regulation through multilateral treaty-making, in particular by the Conference on Disarmament. Nevertheless, we do not share the optimism that the accomplishments thus far are of a comprehensive nature, unless and until nuclear disarmament becomes a reality. Moreover, the imperative of nuclear disarmament should under no circumstances be overshadowed by the ongoing negotiations and deliberations on conventional weapons. Accordingly, it is our earnest hope that in the process of the United Nations reform and restructuring of the disarmament (SSOD I) machinery, the priorities stipulated in the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament be given due consideration and maintained.

The second issue I address concerns peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building. In our view, the General Assembly, as the only truly universal body of the United Nations, should exercise its paramount role in defining the objectives and criteria as well as setting the requisite modalities and guidelines for post-conflict peace-building activities. Likewise, any proposals and measures to enhance United Nations peacekeeping capabilities should receive similar treatment. Having thoroughly studied the Secretary-General's analysis of past peacekeeping operations and their specific difficulties, we are of the view that the success of peacekeeping operations in the future hinges upon genuine multilateral cooperation and compliance with the principles of international law, in particular the provisions of the United Nations Charter. Similarly, the post-conflict peace-building activities to be undertaken by the United Nations should also conform to the political, social, economic and cultural systems of the parties concerned.

In turning to the next issue, let me echo the Secretary-General's emphasis on the importance of the question of human rights. The collective campaign of the world community to define, promote and protect human rights across the globe represents a great achievement of humanity at large and needs to be cherished by all; however, the imperative of a balanced approach to all aspects of human rights, whether civil, political, economic, social or cultural, should not be theoretically underestimated or practically neglected. We join the Secretary-General in welcoming the new United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and wish her the utmost success in this very sensitive area of global concern and international cooperation, in which due attention and consideration must be paid to the specific particularities of all societies.

The last issue I take up concerns development, which in our view should be considered the most pivotal, all-embracing and cross-cutting issue on the United Nations agenda. The serious implications and consequences of recent fundamental transformations in world affairs, particularly those of the twin processes of liberalization and globalization, further accentuate the imperative of development in its broadest sense for the larger segment of the world community. Despite this importance, which is also discernible in large measure in the Secretary-General's report, a number of disquieting trends need to be addressed and adequately dealt with at the level of the Organization.

The quite perceptible, albeit gradual, shift away from multilateralism on the part of the developed world augurs ill in this field. The continuing decline in official development assistance, coupled with a simultaneous growing reliance on bilateral and direct foreign investment, serve as unmistakable indications of this unhealthy process. Undue emphasis on just a few purely environmental aspects of sustainable development to the detriment of the social and economic dimensions of balanced overall development is another negative indication in this regard. We continue to believe that comprehensive development of the South is the prerequisite for peace and security at the global level and deserves to receive the undivided attention of the entire international community, including, in particular, the United Nations.

The Organization's unrivalled role in the field of development, whether analytical, normative or operational, and in contributing to the creation of a favourable international milieu for development, hardly

needs to be emphasized. Nor does the Secretary-General need to be convinced of the centrality of development in the overall work of the Organization. What remains is the United Nations active involvement in the process of development, *inter alia* through full and expeditious implementation of the Agenda for Development.

To conclude, let me add that the great challenge of our time lies in our ability to navigate through the uncharted contours of a new era. All countries, big and small, developed and developing, are facing this challenge, although to varying degrees and in various ways and fields. Moreover, it is not just individual countries but the international community in its entirety that is confronted with this daunting challenge. We all have no choice but to take on the challenge and go forward. I further venture to add that we have no choice but to cooperate and strive collectively towards solving the common problems of humanity.

Mrs. Sinha (India): Permit me to begin by complimenting you, Sir, on the skill with which you have conducted the work of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. I would also like to compliment the Secretary-General on the quality of his report on the work of the Organization, which we are discussing today. The Secretary-General has set the tone for our discussions in the admirable brevity and clarity of his comprehensive coverage of the current challenges facing the United Nations.

The Secretary-General has said that we live in an era of realignment. Indeed, vast forces are at work reshaping the world, but we do not want the process of globalization to be uncontrolled, nor would we welcome a return either to the international anarchy that preceded the creation of the United Nations or to the alignment and confrontation between blocs that vitiated international relations during the cold war. This is why, particularly in an era of realignment, the principles and ideals of non-alignment continue to be so important. And this is also why we think that all Member States must work together to strengthen the United Nations, make its functioning more democratic and representative, and ensure that, through it, we are able to harness to the common good the forces and energies released by the end of the cold war and the inexorable progress of globalization.

It is only the United Nations that can evolve, define and promote a comprehensive and responsive universalist agenda that will meet the challenges of the next century. The Secretariat obviously has a critical role to play. On the one hand, led by its able Secretary-General, it must in its work faithfully reflect the priorities set by Member States and transmitted through intergovernmental mandates; on the other, it is our responsibility to give the Secretariat the resources to do the work that we have assigned it.

There is much with which we agree in the Secretary-General's overview of current developments, which he describes as the contours of the new era. What we find absent, somewhat surprisingly, is any mention of the imperative and critical need for the world community to pursue the goal of nuclear disarmament, to which all Member States are committed, with the sense of urgency it deserves. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the world itself cannot be safe. We regret, therefore, that this year there has been an impasse in the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission on the issue of nuclear disarmament. Having, through the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), perpetuated a monopoly on nuclear weapons, nuclear-weapon States espouse non-proliferation treaties as disarmament measures, impeding progress towards genuine nuclear disarmament. We believe that, in accordance with the principles and priorities of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the United Nations has the foremost responsibility to promote nuclear disarmament.

Over the years the United Nations has developed a range of activities that promote the maintenance of international peace and security. Peacekeeping finds no mention in the Charter of the United Nations, but has almost become synonymous with the United Nations in the popular imagination. The United Nations has had its greatest successes in peacekeeping, but also, in recent years, its most serious controversies. Problems perhaps arose because neither the Security Council nor the Secretariat thought through the implications of the muscular approach to peacekeeping that was briefly adopted in the early 1990s, when it was put forward almost as a panacea for various troubled regions. A sharp downturn has taken place from mid-decade; in 1995, the Secretary-General reported that there were over 67,000 blue helmets engaged in peacekeeping operations; by October of this year, the number had fallen to 18,000. Does this mean that the world has become a safer or more peaceful place? I think not.

What we see is a decline in the United Nations role in peacekeeping and the evolution of concepts like

peacekeeping and peace enforcement by proxy through coalitions of the willing; even more innovative mechanisms are being thought of, including what might almost be called the franchising of peacekeeping by the United Nations to those who can respond the quickest. These and other ad hoc arrangements may be expedient, but they may also be guided by considerations other than a commitment to peace. We have to ask whether these are the best means of ensuring international peace and security, enhancing the United Nations role in collective security or indeed bringing about savings in costs. These are questions raised in the work of the Secretariat and by trends in peacekeeping, the answers to which we need to find.

We welcome the Secretary-General's attention to the new transnational threats of international crime, drug trafficking, money laundering and terrorism, and warmly applaud his determination to position the United Nations to combat them. However, we note with disappointment that, apart from the consolidation of the various functions into a single office, an addition of only two professional posts has been proposed to strengthen the United Nations capacity to address issues related to terrorism. Tokenism is dangerous when the challenge is so real, powerful and widespread. We would encourage the Secretariat to allocate the resources it needs to counter these global challenges effectively and to ask for more intergovernmental support if these are inadequate.

We have read with interest the Secretary-General's analysis of the global economic scenario and share his assessment of the challenges and risks of globalization and liberalization. The recovery of the 1990s could be more sustained, since it is based both on higher growth rates in developing countries, which may well endure, and on the revitalization of the economies in transition. But, while developing countries are increasingly crucial to world growth, this growing centrality has not been reflected in their enhanced participation in rule-setting or decision-making processes. Also, as the Secretary-General has noted elsewhere, the transnational forces that propel global changes, in particular mobile investment and finance, are weakening the ability of national Governments to influence economic and social outcomes, often putting the fulfilment of even national political commitments, not to mention the ability to influence global trends, beyond the reach of elected national representatives.

At the same time, most developing countries continue to be faced with the problems of poverty, the lack of adequate infrastructure, human resource development and technological deficits. Among the recent successes of the United Nations has been the forging of an international consensus on certain areas of global concern and priority through the recent series of global conferences. However, the management of natural resources and human settlements, the provision of basic social services, the support required for targeted programmes for poverty alleviation, the correction of acute gender disabilities, social protection, employment generation and skill development, the improvements sought in public administration and governance — all priorities defined by the global community — are typically activities that require public resources spent through public entities. The fundamental question we need to ask is whether these globally defined priorities lie purely within the domain of national corrective action or whether there is a greater role for international cooperation in mobilizing the requisite political will and external resources to complement, in a commensurate manner, the considerable ongoing efforts by developing countries through their own initiatives at the national level.

We need an international consensus on the role of the United Nations in effectively facilitating the creation of an international economic environment that is conducive to sustained economic growth, particularly in developing countries, to ensure the availability of resources for investments in the social and environmental sectors and for poverty eradication. The ongoing discussions on the Secretary-General's reform proposals should lead to decisions that strengthen the role of the United Nations in the economic and development spheres and ensure that any division of international labour does not restrict it solely to the social sector nor tip the balance wholly towards its normative functions. We need to ensure a role for the United Nations as a facilitator of growth, development and prosperity that is shared equitably among nations. For this, it is imperative that development, sustained economic growth and the eradication of poverty become the principal cross-sectoral priorities on the agenda of the United Nations for the twenty-first century.

The United Nations therefore has a wide charter of responsibilities as it approaches the millennium. We welcome the Secretary-General's attention to reform. As our Prime Minister said during the general debate, India has a vital interest in a United Nations that is continually making itself more responsive to the needs of its Member States and preparing itself to serve them better. We will support all initiatives that help the United Nations adapt to a rapidly changing environment and to the mandates of the international community.

Against these yardsticks, we must ask ourselves if the process of reform so far has had the effects we would have expected. It is, for instance, quite extraordinary that the President of the International Court of Justice should have to complain to the Sixth Committee at this session of the General Assembly that the Court, facing the largest workload in its history, was finding itself severely constrained because the United Nations had not given it the resources it needed. Nor is it at all desirable, either for Member States or the Secretariat that serves them, that the work of the Committees of the General Assembly has been delayed because documentation is delayed.

Quite clearly, cutting costs has not always made the United Nations more efficient. If we want the United Nations to be more active on our behalf, we must give it the resources it needs. Setting out to tackle the titanic and complex forces which call for global action with the United Nations in a financial crisis is not the best way to promote our collective interests. Member States must demonstrate the political will to pay the United Nations all their dues, in full and on time, and to pay as much as the United Nations, within fiscal prudence, needs to discharge its mandates.

The Secretary-General has reported on the need for the United Nations to engage with civil society. We support this, but greater discipline and responsibility need to be introduced in the terms of interaction with this burgeoning civil society. Recently we have seen an industrialist making the United Nations an extraordinarily generous pledge that is almost 10 per cent of its regular budget. While such contributions can certainly supplement the United Nations resources, we need to consider very carefully the implications on its functioning if funding from sources over which there is no intergovernmental control affects the priorities set by Member States. Such financing for the United Nations cannot be a substitute for the financial support from Member States which is mandated by the Charter.

Lastly, for the United Nations to be more effective it must also become more representative and democratic in its functioning. The legitimacy of the Security Council will be enhanced when developing countries, which constitute the vast majority of the United Nations membership, are represented equitably in the category of permanent membership. The General Assembly, the most representative body of the United Nations, must be given new life and should breathe that life into the other bodies of the system. The agendas and priorities of the Organization should reflect the felt needs of the many.

The United Nations was established because we felt that all of us stood to gain from it. That universalist vision should continue to guide the functioning of the Organization.

Mr. Guarini (United States of America): I am privileged to speak on behalf of the United States delegation this morning. My name is Frank Guarini, and I am the representative to the General Assembly on the United States delegation. I also had the privilege of serving as a congressman in the United States House of Representatives in Washington for 14 years.

The Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization is his annual address to the membership and, by extension, to all stakeholders in the Organization. We were impressed that for the first time the Secretary-General made use of an important political and media moment at the opening of this session's general debate to introduce orally this, his "State of the United Nations" report.

This annual report is meant to inform us and spur the General Assembly to action, as does the reporting of the other principal organs to the Assembly. But this year's report on the work of the organization, the first of this incumbent Secretary-General, also compels us to contemplate the direction of the Organization. It considers the contours of our new era, better ways to manage change and possible steps ahead. The United States delegation accepts this opportunity, particularly given the report's premise that

> "the Organization must learn to make far better use of its major potential source of institutional strength: the many complementarities and synergies that exist within it." [A/52/1, para. 3]

The contours of our new era are too varied to describe here. But let us simply agree with the report that key forces transforming the world suggest the need for an intergovernmental organization as a vital and effective instrument of international cooperation.

In the course of arguing for a more sustainable and more stable Organization this past year, Member States and the Secretary-General alike have been seized by its fiscal precariousness. Admittedly, my delegation has shared the pressures from our Capitol on this point. But so many Member States have also felt these individual pressures. All of us have been arguing for material means to attend to beneficial activities. My delegation's

prescription is that incremental adjustments in favour of financial support that is less dependent on any one Member State are again needed for the general health of the Organization.

My delegation's ability to participate with more confidence and with the goodwill of colleagues here is in need of improvement, as is the Organization in need of amounts due which must satisfy its work. We request that this Assembly during its regular session approve the adjustment of the scales of assessments for both the regular budget and the peacekeeping budget in ways which will restore such participation in furtherance of the Assembly's agreed mandates.

Revised scales of assessment would further serve as a visible way to manage change. The report states that

> "all parts of the United Nations have continuously adapted their strategies and programmes to the new and fluid international context". [ibid., para. 21]

We agree with the Secretary-General that reform is not an event, but indeed a process. It is a process for strategically managing change in our world. Reform succeeds when Member States and the Secretary-General give themselves the capability to act on change, instead of having to react to it.

The work of the Organization has been revitalized with the challenge of reform, going beyond mere resources management to incorporate strategic management on behalf of the priorities of the medium-term plan. And they are: international peace and security; promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development; development of Africa; promotion of human rights; coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts; promotion of justice and international law; disarmament; drug control; crime prevention; and combating international terrorism.

We note improvements in the report's format and structure over those of previous years. This is one example that indicates improved stewardship of the resources entrusted to the Secretary-General as chief administrative officer. For 52 years Member States have also entrusted to the United Nations their aspirations and ideals for a better and peaceful world.

How has the stock of the United Nations fared in the last year?

Given the high degree of political attention throughout the year, and particularly during the general debate, we urge colleagues to take note of improvements in the functioning of the United Nations. This would enable more effective promotion of the goals of the Charter. Innovations implemented on the Secretary-General's authority are making reality out of what previously had been our hopes for this noble experiment, the United Nations. The first use of a cabinet by the Secretary-General, for example, demonstrates that the most potent resource of the United Nations is its desire to honour its own latent potential. We should work its useful practices, move beyond those that have served their purposes, and fine-tune for both sending and receiving clearer messages in furtherance of mandates established by all Member States.

This Assembly is abundant in priorities identified by the recent round of global conferences, particularly in the areas of good governance, human rights, democratization, international economic cooperation and sustainable development, development operations, preventive diplomacy, peaceful settlement of disputes and disarmament, as well as humanitarian action and peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building. Strategically, we are managing ourselves with these priorities in what we find prescribed between the lines of every page of the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization.

I shall comment briefly on some passages in the report. The consolidation of the Centre for Human Rights into the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights will strengthen the United Nations human rights machinery. It will also rightly make human rights a major consideration throughout all United Nations activities. It is critical to promote democratic practices and yet have respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. We support bringing together development activities in a United Nations Development Group chaired by the United Nations Development Programme Administrator. Enhancing field level coordination should be its priority. Common premises and services would produce greater efficiency and therefore free up more resources for developing programmes. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the regional economic commissions require further refinements to streamline operations and also to increase efficiency. The completed consolidation of three Secretariat Departments into the new Department of Economic and Social Affairs will promote efficiency and reduce administrative expenses.

The Secretary-General has created a Department for Disarmament Affairs. While we applaud his attention to this serious problem, it is important that the United Nations maintain budgetary restraint. We will therefore work to ensure that the new department does not duplicate or interfere with ongoing related work.

The Department of Humanitarian Affairs was not effective in delivering humanitarian assistance. The Secretary-General was wise to abolish it and to transfer its core functions to the new Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, which, furthermore, would fill a much needed coordination role. It would assess a situation and focus on coordinating an appropriate response along with other United Nations entities, all dealing with the necessary operational activities. This should lead to a more rapid and effective response.

The Secretary-General's report draws attention to the steps ahead. This house, the General Assembly, has become recognized universally as the forum for seeing and being seen, hearing and being heard. Like another 52-year-old invention, the Internet, it is evolving into an increasingly busy, real time, global chat forum. Both are promoting individual and shared interests. As an illustration, at the opening of this session of the Assembly the United States Secretary of State scheduled an unprecedented two weeks at the United Nations to engage effectively and efficiently with foreign leaders and ministers from around the world. Her success was reported in the press here as an innovative way to leverage our foreign policy resources.

The General Assembly has the opportunity to become a living, breathing Internet for the world. We must contemplate what that means for the Organization's future. We must also consider upgrading the way we process our work and explore enhanced capabilities for furthering our Member States together, using all our priorities as a guide. Again, reform has a role to play: to fit this mechanism with the most appropriate devices and technicians available to realize its growing potential as an increasingly effective intergovernmental and operational forum.

We have read the Secretary-General's report, which calls for new paradigms of cooperation. We look forward to making far better use of the United Nations latent potentials on behalf of all its Members' mandates.

Mr. Sucharipa (Austria): The debate on the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization provides us with one of the few opportunities we have to look at the whole rather than at specific parts of our work. The United Nations is shaped by political realities in the world. Indeed, in large parts it can but mirror these developments, while at least sometimes being a catalyst for positive change. At its best, the United Nations is a tool we agree to use to tackle the growing number of challenges none of us can take on alone.

It is therefore not surprising that the Organization finds itself in transition. The bipolar world order ended only a few years ago. Since then, we have witnessed the beginnings of the evolution of a multipolar order, the eventual form of which we can hardly sketch out at this point in time. As the Secretary-General rightly points out in his report, this transition is marked by seemingly contradictory trends of integration and fragmentation. Our own debates on many important issues have clearly reflected these contradictions as well as another typical sign of change: the split between forward-looking and backward-oriented policies. History teaches us that fundamental change cannot and will not be stopped by clinging to the past. If we want to make use of this unique opportunity, we have to embrace change and shape it.

Last year, when we spoke on this agenda item, we expressed the hope that we would be able to complete a meaningful reform of the United Nations in 1997. Unfortunately, progress has been slow and somewhat less than satisfactory. The Secretary-General presented us with a balanced and substantial package of measures and recommendations in July that squarely address the challenges we face. It is now our responsibility as Member States to do our part if we are to fulfil the pledge made by the Heads of States and Governments to make this Organization fit for the twenty-first century. We hope that the intensive work done in the informal meetings of the plenary over the past few weeks will very soon be concluded with a clear signal that we, the Member States, are serious about strengthening the United Nations.

As a traditionally loyal supporter of the United Nations, Austria cannot abide seeing our Organization fall prey to creeping irrelevance. If we continue to oppose reform for opposition's sake or for fear of the unknown, we run the very real risk of stripping the United Nations of importance. Many have bemoaned the lack of interest public opinion has shown in United Nations matters. We have asked for new strategies to better sell our product to the media. But if we, the membership as a whole, insist on wasting our time

fighting over minute changes in language, we shall very soon no longer have a product to sell. If we do not keep the Organization a capable player, it will become a bystander. And it is much too important for that to happen.

In order to remain relevant, this Organization must today, more than ever before, better focus on those issues where it can make a real difference. The Secretary-General's report before us sets an excellent example in highlighting these areas of activity. We welcome the precise nature of the report, as well as the fact that the Secretary-General could present it personally before this General Assembly at the beginning of its session. We welcome the effort to provide focus to the general debate.

The tasks of the United Nations are manifold. They reach from the maintenance of international peace and security to the promotion of sustainable development and post-conflict peace-building; from the eradication of poverty to the promotion of human rights for all; from the protection of our environment to the further elaboration of international law. In all these, as in many other areas, such as drug control and crime prevention — a field which the Secretary-General rightly describes as one of major concern for the international community — universal debate, policy formulation and norm-setting, as well as the implementation of agreed measures, are required.

This house is based on a democratic structure not unlike the parliaments of most of its Member States. Thus, a wide spectrum of support is needed for effective action. At the same time, those who truly believe in the Organization and in its unique possibilities cannot allow this potential to be endangered and jeopardized by those who have lost faith.

We firmly believe that reform is necessary for its own sake. I know that many delegations in this Hall share this view in principle, but have strong reservations about reforming the Organization in an unnecessarily difficult financial situation. Important amounts of money are withheld, contrary to consensually adopted obligations. With no guarantee that even a consensus on in-depth reform would secure the financial future of the United Nations, it is not hard to take their point. This Organization does not belong to any one country or group of countries alone. It is time for all of us to face the realities shaping our cooperation. To make meaningful progress, we need the broadest possible support on the floor of this Hall as well as in the bank accounts of the Organization.

The Secretary-General has repeatedly said that reform is a process, not an event. If we cannot provide a good start to this process within the next few weeks, it could turn out to be a non-event. There could be no justification for such a happening.

Mr. Manley (United Kingdom): I shall be brief. As so many have said this morning, the report which is before us is most welcome, both in its form and in its content. We share the strong commitment expressed by the Secretary-General in the report to fundamental, not piecemeal, reform at the United Nations; to developing the central role of the Organization in the fields of peace, development, human rights and the environment; and to organizing the structure of the Organization around these core tasks. I would add that we very strongly support the comments just made by the Permanent Representative of Austria in regard to the reform of this Organization. We are sure, for our part, that the report of the Secretary-General which is before us will influence our work in all those areas, including reform, and for the better.

The British delegation would also like to commend the Secretary-General for the form of the report and the manner of its presentation. It is exactly the sort of shorter and more forward-looking report which the Working Group on United Nations strengthening hoped to see. And the Secretary-General's decision to introduce the report in plenary immediately before the start of the general debate was a bold and innovative step which gave greater focus and a higher profile to the debate that ensued amongst our Ministers. It is steps like these which, more than anything, can help to revitalize this Assembly and give new energy to the Organization as a whole. We welcome them wholeheartedly.

Mr. Dumitriu (Romania): I am pleased to start the few remarks that my delegation wishes to make on agenda item 10 by welcoming the new, concise format of the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization.

The first report of Secretary-General Kofi Annan gives us a broad and comprehensive view on what the United Nations does and what it is expected to do, and on the features of the global environment in which it works. Less descriptive than previous reports, but no less substantial, the report highlights better the uniqueness of the United Nations as the most inclusive multilateral framework in a position to maximize international cooperation in facing the powerful forces of globalization.

The ample analysis presented in the first part of the report — "Contours of the new era" — is not just an intellectual adornment to a colourless account of facts, be they achievements or failures. It is, rather, a lucid effort to convey a message that we may ignore at our peril.

It is not yet clear that globalization pushes mankind in the same direction. As emphasized by the report, the integrative trends are accompanied by tendencies towards fragmentation. The information superhighway is taking us to the digitally organized life and cyber-mentalities, but on its sidewalks illiteracy and extreme poverty continue to coexist. The transnational expansion of civil society also provides energies abused by the destructive transboundary forces of organized crime, terrorism and drug-trafficking. The rapid technological developments are not accompanied by a superior sense of morality and ethics.

Under these circumstances, it is apparent that the international community has the duty to take advantage of and reinforce the available multilateral mechanisms, however imperfect. We are not allowed to indulge ourselves in the blind defence of narrow, selfish interests and let the Organization be shaken by curable financial diseases and fixable structural weaknesses. The United Nations is still the best-equipped instrument of concerted action of nations and can further be made able to harness the mutual benefits of globalization while managing its adverse effects.

This is the message my delegation reads in the report of the Secretary-General, and we support it.

The report identifies a series of needs that should be translated into priorities for the United Nations: to deal with inter-ethnic and other domestic conflicts, instability and security; to make all countries reap the benefits of globalization; to enable marginalized countries to participate actively in the global economy; to empower marginalized people to participate actively in the life of their societies by supporting participation, human rights and democracy; and to assert individuality and diversity and respect for law, both nationally and internationally.

The efforts of the United Nations in these directions are echoed in the second part of the report, entitled "Managing change". My delegation agrees with the conclusions reached by the Secretary-General as to the main areas of action of the United Nations. Indeed, good governance, human rights and democratization are essential means to accomplish the objectives of peace, sustainable development and broadly shared prosperity.

This fundamental issue was deeply considered by the ministers and representatives of 77 countries and 47 non-governmental organizations which participated in the Third International Conference of the New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development, which took place in Bucharest from 2 to 4 September 1997. In the final document, they emphasized the

> "almost universal recognition that a democratic system of government is the best model to ensure a framework of liberties for lasting solutions to the political, economic and social problems that our societies face." [A/52/334, appendix, third paragraph]

It was also recognized that

> "The real challenge today is how to strengthen democracy through the practices of efficient government, transparency and anti-corruption measures, in order to promote sustainable human development and bring the State closer to the people." [*ibid*, tenth paragraph]

My delegation detected with satisfaction the spirit of the Bucharest document reflected in the report of the Secretary-General.

The sections on international economic cooperation, sustainable development and development operations are realistic and action-oriented. We fully agree with the pronouncement that competent, accountable and responsive public institutions are essential for the achievement of development. The United Nations should foster a supportive international framework and try to counterbalance, through more efficient advocacy and better management of resources, the effects of the current decline in official development assistance.

The sections on preventive diplomacy, peaceful settlements of disputes, peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building give us the picture of a quite impressive array of actions by a variety of organizations, States or groups of States and prominent personalities. All were mobilized and backed by the United Nations. They have not solved all the tensions, disputes or conflicts they dealt with. Nevertheless, even in the worst of cases, actions under United Nations auspices discouraged their escalation. What they accomplished was the result of the fact that they bore the imprint of the moral authority of the United Nations. That is something that the

Organization's current tribulations and its critics cannot diminish.

As a final remark on this part, allow me, Sir, to allude to the burning issue of internal conflicts. These conflicts are correctly seen as one of the side-effects of the end of the cold war and super-Power rivalry. Nevertheless, one can also see that the States themselves behave with more responsibility than in the past and are less inclined to wage war against each other. If that is admitted, we should credit the United Nations, which offers norms for international conduct and sets up benchmarks which few are willing to ignore.

The last part of the report of the Secretary-General — "The steps ahead" — like the whole document, looks at the future. The future advocated by him, however, is closer than one might think. As a matter of fact, this part is the renewal of a strong plea to Member States to proceed with the approval of the programme of reform. Our attention is invited to the idea that the United Nations must undergo fundamental, not piecemeal, reform. He requests us not to surrender to inertia and to accept the challenges of change.

My delegation takes this opportunity to reiterate its own support for the reform package proposed by the Secretary-General. We believe that it is the responsibility of Member States, which remain while Secretaries-General go.

To conclude, I would like to quote again from the final document adopted by the Bucharest Conference of the New or Restored Democracies:

> "Managing globalization requires capable leaders, political will and ethical determination to assume the risk and the moral responsibility of change." [*ibid*, appendix, part I E, second paragraph]

That coincided with the meaning my delegation has taken from its reading of the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization.

Mr. Henze (Germany): The report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization stands out for many reasons: it is short and concise; it is comprehensive, analytical and thought-provoking. It should be presented to a wide readership. It lays out the threads which we, the Member States, must pick up in order to give our Organization a sense of purpose and direction for the future.

Germany commends the Secretary-General and his colleagues for this outstanding piece of work. It is complementary to the Secretary-General's reform proposals. The report demonstrates in many instances how these proposals tie in with the work and practice of the Organization. Furthermore, it suggests looking at the Organization from a new perspective and provides the reader with an integrated view of its different units and structures. It brings to bear a fundamental experience that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. To create this whole, the Secretary-General has announced his intention to refocus the Organization and to make its efforts more coherent. We found ample evidence of this endeavour in the report, and we therefore welcome it.

The Secretary-General has rightly put good governance, human rights and democratization, international economic cooperation, sustainable development and development operations at the top of the list of United Nations activities. The cluster of good governance, human rights and democratization has been identified as an essential building block for meeting the objectives of sustained development, prosperity and peace. At the same time, development, peace and prosperity will remain elusive if the international community fails to secure full and equal rights for women and girls, who constitute half the population of the world. The United Nations is called upon to continue to promote the empowerment of women and their full integration into the societies of the coming centuries.

The capacity and activities of the United Nations in these areas have increased in recent years. New and innovative approaches have been pursued, such as advisory services and technical assistance. Human rights field operations also contribute to protecting and promoting respect for human rights. United Nations electoral assistance is so sought after that not all requests can met. Germany has supported these various activities with contributions to voluntary funds as well as by providing election observers or staff for various field missions, and we commend the Secretary-General for his determination and leadership in this field.

We are facing new challenges in the areas of international economic cooperation and development operations to which we must respond. There is a growing recognition among countries and the public at large that these demand concerted action by States. As a result, we have witnessed a worldwide trend towards multilateral cooperation. But a substantial part of the world population has remained excluded from the new

opportunities presented by globalization and technological innovations. The daily lives of millions of people continue to be ruined by the scourge of war and other violent conflicts. In a world which is moving ever closer to becoming a global village, this is deeply disturbing. We must therefore address existing and emerging crises and conflicts more vigorously and more systematically. We must refocus our attention towards the underlying causes of the problems at hand.

Between 1980 and 1994, global expenditures for bilateral emergency assistance rose from 2 per cent to 10 per cent of official development assistance. Too many resources have to be diverted to contain crises and to alleviate the most acute sufferings of people. In many cases, projects for long-term development already underway are destroyed or have to be put on hold until stable conditions prevail. Damage prevention is less costly than damage repair. For this reason, Germany has begun to refocus its attention on crisis prevention through the traditional instruments of development cooperation. The aim is to assess the potential for crisis systematically and to incorporate the results in our development cooperation.

The internal political and economic environment of a country is crucial to the success or failure of development. There are five criteria which we believe are conducive to effective development. These criteria are respect for human rights, popular participation in political decision-making, the rule of law and guaranteed legal security, the introduction of a social market economy, and the orientation of State action towards development.

Let me give a few examples which might illustrate these considerations. The aim of development assistance is to improve the livelihoods of people, especially the poorest. Steep population increases can exacerbate competition not only for social services, employment and other income opportunities but also for arable land, water and energy. Our concept emphasizes improved family planning services, and in this context helps promoting women's access to health and education services.

Marginalization of social strata of the population may also lead to conflict. Development cooperation can help countries to establish their own systems of participatory society.

To prevent crises from perpetuating themselves, we have to set up programmes which help reintegrate former combatants into civil life, rebuild infrastructure, restore civil administrations and rekindle economic activities. These efforts can play an important long-term role in the framework of post-conflict peace-building.

We welcome the fact that many of the operational activities of the United Nations, through the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund, are also undertaken in these areas.

The special session of the General Assembly held in June this year highlighted the threats caused by environmental degradation. One case in point is global warming caused by greenhouse gases, which has the potential to wipe entire countries — States Members of the United Nations — from the face of the Earth. These environmental challenges must be met. Unfortunately, our world body has not so far been able to respond adequately to our high expectations.

Meanwhile, the incidence of environmental disasters which can be related to environmental degradation seems to have increased dramatically in recent years. To mitigate their impact and magnitude, it has been suggested that an early-warning system should be established. This concept has been actively promoted by my Government since the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, in the course of deliberations and through voluntary financial contributions. Our idea of an environmental early-warning system has been cast into a resolution. We now look forward to the first report of the Secretary-General on this issue, and we will continue to support system-wide efforts in this regard.

We do not suggest that we have invented anything new by promoting development cooperation as a preventive tool. All we are doing is to try to refocus the application of the existing instruments of development assistance more consciously in order to address these complex issues, and we invite the international community likewise to increase their efforts so as to tackle these very pressing tasks. Let us cooperate so that in future sustained and uninterrupted development will be the rule, and the need for peacekeeping the exception.

The Secretary-General's report clearly shows that the United Nations is productive in all the areas which I have mentioned. The major world conferences and summits of the last decade have defined the global agenda for years to come. Through these landmark events, we have committed ourselves to high standards and goals. Now is

the time to make them reality; the United Nations should be the driving force in this process.

However, the United Nations needs a well coordinated, coherent and comprehensive approach to the follow-up of these conferences. This is why the Economic and Social Council must fulfil its role as a coordinating body for the United Nations system; the Council should adapt its working methods to this task where needed. In this regard, we expect next spring's special session of the Economic and Social Council to give new impetus to the coordinated implementation of the outcomes of the Rio, Copenhagen, Beijing and other conferences.

As the world undergoes profound changes, we as actors on the international stage must adapt, and so must United Nations. For years, this Organization has been struggling with difficulties which have reduced its ability to fully perform its functions. It has been in a financial crisis for the last 10 years, and its present financial constitution seems worse than ever. In the area of managerial and institutional reform, realistic and far-reaching proposals are on the table, but Member States have yet to respond commensurately in order to turn vision into reality. Furthermore, the debate on the reform of the Security Council is not going forward as we would like to see it do. The "full-picture" proposal of the previous President of the General Assembly, Mr. Razali Ismail, is on the table. This balanced reform proposal has been thoroughly discussed. No other plan is in sight which could match it. We should not let more time go by without seizing this historic opportunity.

But, as the saying goes, every crisis is an opportunity in disguise. Let us therefore take the necessary decisions on all the reforms now. Let us provide the United Nations with the means to fully play its role in the next century. The Secretary-General has proposed the direction in which this Organization should go. It is now for us, the Member States, to decide, and to help him get on with the job.

Mr. Fulci (Italy): I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his impressive first report on the work of the Organization, which highlights the key forces transforming the international community and envisions how the United Nations must respond to them.

I wish to consider the following points: human rights and democratization; peaceful settlement of disputes and peacekeeping operations; economic cooperation and development; new transnational threats; and management and communications.

The United Nations plays a crucial role in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which the Vienna Declaration of 1993 reaffirms as the birthright of all human beings. It also stresses that democracy, development and respect for human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. We fully subscribe to the Secretary-General's measures to ensure that the cross-cutting nature of these issues is fully reflected in the United Nations programme of work, in which the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is called on to play a pivotal role.

The Secretary-General rightly underlines the role of the United Nations in strengthening the democratic systems of Member States by providing assistance at their request. There is a strong need for more open channels of communication between the United Nations and civil society. It is high time that the United Nations acknowledged in unequivocal terms the contribution that can be made to its work by civil society, in particular by non-governmental organizations, which provided much of the input to the international conferences of the 1990s in the economic and social fields. We strongly believe that the United Nations should devise ways and means to improve its interaction with the non-governmental organizations.

The chapters on "Preventive diplomacy, peaceful settlement of disputes and disarmament" and "Peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building" represent a realistic, accurate analysis of the United Nations role in the maintenance of international peace and security.

As the report underlines,

> "Early post-cold-war euphoria greatly exaggerated the range of possibilities for expanding the scope of United Nations peace operations, but the more recent sense of limits may err in the opposite direction." [A/52/1, para.108]

As we stated last year, Italy remains firmly convinced that the United Nations cannot impose peace by waging war. The United Nations has neither the vocation nor the structure and resources to carry out peace enforcement operations. Instead, it should rely on regional organizations or coalitions of States that are better equipped to plan and implement these operations more successfully.

But for all other peacekeeping operations, in the literal sense of the term, we believe in the great efforts

under way to make stand-by arrangements, which Italy has signed, to provide the United Nations with rapid deployment capacity. To strengthen every component of peacekeeping, the Secretariat, in response to the Fifth Committee's invitation, should first define the concept of logistic support as the frame of reference for all initiatives in the sector.

We are closely following the endeavours of the African countries, and of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) — with which Italy actively collaborates — in particular, to improve the capacity to respond to and intervene in crisis situations on their continent. We look with favour on the possible creation, within the framework of the United Nations, of a support group to study such issues and to offer concrete assistance to the African States.

Needless to say, Italy also attaches the utmost importance to the role of the United Nations in preventing, controlling and resolving conflicts. The report eloquently describes the Secretary-General's ceaseless efforts in every crisis area.

African initiatives have to deal with the extreme complexity that often characterizes crises on that continent. However, we believe that the efforts of the Secretary-General's special envoy to Central Africa, Mohamed Sahnoun, have had a positive effect, and should be pursued in coordination with the action of other mediators, in particular Aldo Ajello for the European Union.

In our opinion, the case of Albania also deserves special mention because of the excellent cooperation among all the international organizations involved. With extraordinary speed, the Security Council authorized a multinational "coalition of the willing" — Operation Alba — led by Italy and deployed in Albania in a matter of only a few days. Its mandate was to facilitate the distribution of humanitarian aid and help create safe conditions for the missions of the international organizations operating in the country.

During the Security Council debate of 14 August 1997 on the conclusion of Operation Alba, many delegations described it as a model, including the following aspects: unity of intent by the group of countries involved; decisive, prompt action taken by the Security Council; a very clear mandate; definite limits on the time-frame; rapid planning and deployment; and in-depth political coordination and consultation among all the parties involved, with none excluded, through an ad hoc steering committee.

Now that the emergency phase is over, each international organization will do its part for the overall rehabilitation of Albania. These include the United Nations, the European Union and Commission, the international financial institutions, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe, the humanitarian agencies and organizations, the Western European Union (WEU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

In the field of economic cooperation and development, Italy warmly welcomes the Secretary-General's action to establish the United Nations Development Group, which will streamline the Organization's operational activities for development. The decision to entrust the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with the responsibility of convening the Group is consistent with the central role that UNDP plays in development. I wish to recall here that, despite a decline in voluntary contributions to the general resources due to a temporary — and I underline the word "temporary" — negative economic juncture, Italy is still one of the top donors of non-core resources to UNDP. The Development Programme for Displaced Persons, Refugees and Returnees (PRODERE) and similar initiatives launched in Central America, Mozambique, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and soon in Angola, illustrate the full extent of cooperation between Italy and UNDP. In this context, my country is also engaged in active, constant cooperation with the Alliance of Small Island States, a group of countries which must be assisted in order to face the environmental changes and their adverse economic consequences for the planet.

While the restructuring of UNDP will be conducive to more efficient and effective UNDP programmes, efficiency alone cannot solve the problem of poverty or ensure sustainable development in developing countries. While it can help, this cannot be an alibi for donor countries to lower their commitment to development assistance. At the Rome World Food Summit last November, high-level representatives of all Governments pledged to cut in half by the year 2015 the number of people suffering from malnutrition, currently estimated at 840 million. For this, and for all other commitments contained in the plans of action of the major United Nations conferences, Italy will make every effort to provide resources to the United Nations to fight to eradicate poverty.

We fully endorse the Secretary-General's vision of the role of the United Nations in fighting new international threats. Criminal activities and drug trafficking threaten the safety and welfare of citizens and nations around the world. In recognition of the seriousness of this phenomenon, the United Nations has developed over the years crime and drug prevention programmes aimed at fostering international cooperation and strengthening the national capacity of Member States to meet these challenges.

We warmly welcome the Secretary-General's initiatives to strengthen the Vienna Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention. This will enable the Organization to make a crucial contribution to the fight against "uncivil society" actors, as the Secretary-General so rightly called them. The new Director of the Vienna Office, Professor Pino Arlacchi, can provide genuine enthusiasm, dynamic leadership and tested expertise.

The ability of the United Nations to meet the challenges of the future will also depend very much on its capacity to deal efficiently and systematically with the rising flow of information. We strongly support the initiatives of the United Nations Secretariat for information technology changes in the structure and functioning of the United Nations. Major progress towards overcoming the gap in information technology will lead to a more efficient Organization, lower costs and better services — by the way, we were delighted to see computers being installed in the Delegates' Lounge.

In this context we commend the results obtained by the Economic and Social Council Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on informatics, chaired by the Permanent Representative of Pakistan, our colleague Ambassador Ahmad Kamal, whose peerless diplomatic ability and keen insight made many of these results possible.

A final comment on legal affairs: we note with satisfaction the results achieved and the progress made in the past year in the area of the codification and development of international law. In particular, we praise the efforts carried out for the establishment of an international criminal court. The Preparatory Committee has done, and we are confident will continue to do, an admirable job in elaborating the text of the court's statute, to be submitted to the Rome diplomatic conference next year.

The debate on agenda item 59 concerning the reform of the Security Council is now scheduled for 4 December. That is why I had not planned to touch on that issue in today's discussion. However, since other delegations have raised this matter, I felt that I, too, had to make a couple of remarks — just a couple; I do not want to abuse the patience and time of the Assembly.

I want to repeat that Italy is fully committed to the reform of the Security Council in view of the increased membership of the United Nations and the need to meet the challenges of the next centuries. Thus, we do recognize the urgency of this matter, but not — absolutely not — at the cost of making hasty decisions before real general agreement is reached. In this regard, resolution 48/26, by which the General Assembly established the Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council, specifically underlined — I wish to repeat this loud and clear — the need and importance of reaching "general agreement".

As the President of the Republic of Italy, President Scalfaro, mentioned in his United Nations Day message to the Secretary-General, Italy is deeply convinced that no reform can be fair and effective unless it is inspired by the fundamental principles of our Charter. Allow me to remind the Assembly that these principles are equality of States; equitable geographical representation; and the full involvement of all States in the life and responsibility of the Organization, with none excluded. The reform of the Security Council is a matter of vital importance to this Organization. We must beware of the temptation to take procedural short cuts that may seem easy but would go against the letter and spirit of the Charter. Above all, they could create irreparable damage to the United Nations and also have negative repercussions on the current effort by the Secretary-General to reform the Organization as a whole.

It is for these reasons, and for these reasons only, that we, together with a group of other Member States, have recently taken initiatives aiming to safeguard the Security Council reform process from any attempt to impose a time-frame; to prevent hasty solutions that would disregard the fundamental provisions of our Charter; and, above all, to ensure that a genuine, global and general agreement can be reached beforehand on a matter of such magnitude. As my Foreign Minister, Mr. Dini, said in his speech in Rome on 29 October celebrating United Nations Day, it is not true — I repeat here — that we are moved by the desire to block the ambition of one, two or more States. Our proposals are based on a rigorous, broad, far-reaching and courageous vision. Our approach is not directed against anybody; it

is directed towards the good of the total membership of the United Nations, not the good of just a few Members. In short, I recall once again what I said last year: we are for the participation of all and for the exclusion of none.

Mr. Campbell (Ireland): This debate on the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization gives us an opportunity to review themes affecting our work over the past year and the extent to which the Organization is adapting to meet new challenges. I want to express the Irish delegation's thanks to the Secretary-General for his report and for the way in which he presented it personally to this Assembly at the outset of our work. It is his first in office, as he himself points out, and it marks a change in the emphasis that it gives to the interpretation of events and the particular needs which they foreshadow.

The report is much shorter than recent versions and inevitably is a less complete record of the myriad activities of the Organization. But in terms of readability it gains greatly, and whereas the earlier format acted as a useful source of reference, it served less easily for a debate among Member States, which must focus on the broad picture of dominant trends and priorities for action.

The report underlines the essential role of multilateral diplomacy in a world of rapid and often unpredictable change. No emphasis on multilateralism can be too strong at a time when faith in its virtues is questioned in important quarters. Globalization, and the multitude of interlinking dependencies which come with it, only serves to reinforce this reality. The Secretary-General's analysis of the immense benefits, but also the problems, that accompany globalization offers a clear call to reaffirm our faith in multilateralism and our determination to uphold it. In this process the United Nations and the United Nations system hold a central place.

The report rightly places great emphasis on good governance, human rights and democratization in the work of the Organization. It is now possible, as the report claims, to approach human rights in practical as well as principled terms from a truly global perspective.

Equally, the place of development is properly given central emphasis in the report's overview. The fifty-first session of the General Assembly saw the adoption of An Agenda for Development. That was a hard won, but not insignificant, achievement. In reviewing development issues across the board, the Secretary-General notes that the United Nations development organizations face enormous challenges with very limited resources, and enhanced support is necessary.

The resources, he points out, that are available to the United Nations, and to intergovernmental organizations generally, are declining relative to the scale of the problems which they face and to the capacity of other actors, notably in the private sector.

At the same time, the control of Governments over many international developments, financial or other, is less complete than previously. The Secretary-General hardly exaggerates in describing the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, held last summer to review the implementation of Agenda 21, as a "sober reflection" [A/52/1, para. 45] on the limited progress achieved since Rio.

The Secretary-General is right in seeing this situation as one which does not allow the United Nations to stand still or to advance simply through incremental adaptation. The report makes a clear case for a process of fundamental reform, and it is his emphasis on this theme, running as a thread through the account of all aspects of the Organization's work, that gives the report its particular coherence and force.

My Government has strongly backed the Secretary-General in this approach, and we pay tribute to the clear and persuasive manner in which he has presented it. We hope that within the next few days the General Assembly will give its unequivocal backing to the actions presented in his report on reform and that the same serious purpose will lead to an early solution of the United Nations financial crisis caused by non-payment of dues.

Resolution 51/241, adopted at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, contains a number of provisions designed to influence future versions of the Secretary-General's report. In many respects the report this year has already anticipated these provisions in the clearer focus it gives to main themes and developments which need our attention. The resolution calls for a report that is more easily directed to assessing the way in which mandates of the General Assembly have been fulfilled over the past year and setting priorities for the period ahead in the major political, economic and social, administrative and financial areas.

It also calls for a specific section in the report outlining goals for the Secretariat in the year ahead in the

context of the Organization's work plan and taking into account the medium-term plan.

We hope that this format will allow an even more coherent and thought out reading of the Secretary-General's report which embodies the overall sense of purpose and direction in the work of the Organization which he is uniquely qualified to give. The timing and assessment provisions foreseen would also add to the action-oriented thrust that it is hoped the report will continue to inspire in future years.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Allow me to express our thanks to the Secretary-General for his report, contained in document A/52/1, providing us with a thematic overview of the activities of the Organization over the past year. The Secretary-General deserves our appreciation for the incisive analysis of the trends shaping today's world and the vision he proposes to bring to bear on the role of the United Nations in meeting the challenges facing humanity.

We see the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization as a statement of our collective achievements as well as of our collective failures. We regard the report also as a guideline for the year ahead. This year's report, the first of the new Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, coincides with the renewed drive for reform of the Organization.

My delegation will be brief and will touch on two of the main themes contained the report.

The first is international peace and security. We appreciate the initiatives taken by the Secretary-General in respect of long-standing disputes and the objectivity with which he has interpreted the conflict situations. They point the way for future action. The section on peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building could be regarded as comprehensive but for two elements. A brief overview of the evolving nature of peacekeeping would have been useful. Similarly, some of the highlights of the work of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations could have been included in the report. The reporting on arms control and disarmament lacks comprehensiveness. There is little focus on the regional imperatives and efforts. Although the perspective of peace and security finds a mention, the linkage between disarmament and development has not been articulated. The intention to bring disarmament to centre stage of the United Nations agenda will be meaningful only when it is placed in the perspective of the twin objectives of reducing of both military and non-military threats to peace and security.

The second is development. A conscious effort at comprehensive reporting is manifest in this section. We are happy that the Secretary-General considers it a core mission of the United Nations to facilitate the successful integration of currently marginalized countries as active participants in the world economy. But this introductory pledge does not find a concrete reflection in the thematic section. For instance, there is not a single reference to the least developed countries in the discussion. The absence of conspicuous reference to this most disadvantaged and marginalized group of 48 countries is a matter of great concern to us at a time when most of the objectives of the Programme of Action for the least developed countries still remains to be achieved. The report does not seem to focus on the implementation of the outcome of the 1990s cycle of major international conferences, except the World Conference on Human Rights, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II). The imperative of brevity, if this was the case, should not have been at the cost of the continued focus on the follow-up of these major global conferences.

In this connection, we join the delegation of Malaysia in reiterating the request for inclusion of information on the status of implementation of resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly.

We are happy that the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes are making increased and targeted efforts at development and promotion of human rights, particularly extending assistance for strengthening or building institutional capacities of Member States. In this connection, I wish to mention that Bangladesh has been a beneficiary of assistance from the United Nations Development Programme that has greatly facilitated work towards the establishment of an independent National Human Rights Commission. The assistance for strengthening democratic institutions such as the Election Commission and the Parliament has also been deeply appreciated in my country.

The Charter places promotion of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the context of international cooperation in solving problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character on the basis of the principle of non-discrimination. We believe that human rights should be pursued in holistic

terms and in their proper context. For decades, a partial and, hence, critically distorted approach — with an almost exclusive focus on civil and political rights — has failed the cause. It is a matter of satisfaction to note that due cognizance has been taken of the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action in the report. This assumes particular significance in the perspective of the ongoing process of reform and restructuring. We are confident that the new United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights will be able to make historic progress in the realization of human rights in their totality and throughout the world.

The accomplishment of the reform is expected to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the Organization. The Secretary-General has claimed our unanimous appreciation for presenting within a short period a comprehensive set of reforms, which have been under consideration by the Assembly. The realization of the objectives will, however, depend on the political will of the Member States, who will judge the performance by ultimate delivery. In the process, the will of the international community to have the United Nations function to its full potential will also become evident. We should all act throughout the year in such a way as to have a report next year that provides a statement of greater achievements, loftier vision and higher commitment.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 10.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.